

with some totemistic form of tortoise-worship, and now as they have forgotten that they are Buddhists, they worship the tortoise-shaped deity as Kūrmārūpi Bhagavān.

[HARAPRASĀD SHĀSTRĪ.]

III. *Some general considerations.*

Chelonia play an important part in Hindu iconography mainly in two connections (if they are actually distinct), viz. the Tortoise Incarnation of Vishnu and the myth of the Churning of the Ocean. Both are frequently illustrated in the stone-carvings of temples, in the wood-carvings of processional cars and in paintings of various kinds, more particularly in South India. Haraprasād Shāstri's note on the occurrence of a tortoise-figure on playing cards in Bengal shows that representations of the kind are also found in the northern part of India. Since visiting the three shrines to which allusion is made in the first part of this paper, I have examined a large number of carvings, paintings and clay models both of the Tortoise Incarnation and of the gods and demons churning the Ocean by means of the great snake wound round Mount Mandār, which rests on a tortoise. In many examples of both subjects the tortoise is highly conventionalized and cannot be recognized as a representation of any particular type of chelonian. In every case, however, in which it is recognizable, it clearly represents a Trionychid, with its round, flat carapace devoid of any external plates, its very long neck, comparatively small head and tubular nostrils. In some cases in which the figure is unusually elaborate I believe that the actual species that has served as a model is *Chitra indica*. This species is distinguished from all other Indian forms by the peculiar shape of the head and by the proximity of the eyes to the tip of the snout. It appears to be represented even in some sculptures from Madras.

Now, the larger Trionychidae are very scarce in Peninsular India south of the Mahānaddī and, indeed, are probably absent altogether from the greater number of the rivers of the Madras Presidency. *Chitra indica* is only known from the Ganges, the Indus¹ and the Irrawadi river-systems. The genus *Emyda* on the other hand, to which the little soft-shelled pond-turtles of the plains belong, is common both in the valleys of the Ganges and the Indus and also all over the Peninsular Area properly so called. It is to this genus that the mud-turtles placed in altars in Northern India probably belong (p. 134). The people of the Ganges valley distinguish clearly between the different species of mud-turtles found in rivers and ponds in Bengal

¹ Mr. Bains Prasad of the Government College, Lahore, has recently obtained a specimen from a small stream on the Indus system near Ferozepur.—June 25th, 1914.

[N.S.]

and Bihar, because most of them are used as food and some are more highly esteemed than others.¹ The largest and most powerful species is *Chitra indica*. It is apparently the species that is regarded as the "vehicle" of the goddess of the Jumna,² just as the crocodile is the "vehicle" of Mother Ganges.

Such evidence as is at present available would, therefore, seem to suggest that the "tortoise" of Indian iconography is not one of the land-tortoises (Testudinidae) but a mud-turtle belonging to the family Trionychidae, and that the reverence for the animal originated in Northern India. All representatives of the family probably share or shared in the respect due to the form assumed in an incarnation, but it is possible that the actual species at one time revered was *Chitra indica*, which may very well have been the totem or the ancestral god of some particular clan or tribe. The strength of these mud-turtles is very great and *Chitra indica*, although it has not the powerful jaws of the species of *Trionyx*, is said even to attack boats with blows.³ Its carapace alone may attain a length of at least six feet. It is, therefore, an animal that would naturally attract both the attention and the respect of a primitive people.

[N. ANNANDALE.]

ADDENDUM.

Note by Mr. H. E. Stapleton on the Chittagong Turtles.

The correct name of the saint (not 'place' I think) known to you as "Sultan Bagu Bastan" is "Sultan Bayazid of Bastam." 'Bastam' (or 'Bistam') is a town in Persia, and the saint is said to have visited Chittagong for devotional exercises. The mausoleum, which is some 5 miles out of Chitta-

¹ See Chaudhuri, *Rec. Ind. Mus.*, vol. VII, p. 212. Various species of tortoises are allowable as clean food for Hindus. There are Hindus who are absolutely vegetarian, but the majority of them do not object to fish or meat. As regards tortoise-meat, that of some species is considered clean and that of some unclean. The meat of that species of tortoise which is called *Dundi* is allowable even for Brahmans. It has a hard shell above and a hard cartilage below. It has a ridge on its back. It is the species called *Dhoor* in Mr. B. L. Chaudhuri's note, i.e. *Kachuga dhongoka* (Gray). The eggs are considered a delicacy. These are found inside the tortoise in the form of a garland several yards long. There is another species called *Sundi*, a small land-tortoise, which is also eaten by the higher classes. *Keto* (that is, "wooden") is another species the meat of which is allowable. But the big tortoises, all called *Barkole*, are never used as food except by the lower classes. These are very big, sometimes containing maunds of meat. In one of Asoka's inscriptions he prohibited the use of *Dudi's* meat, that is, the meat of *Dudr* or *Dhoor*.—*Haraprasād Shastri*.

² Large individuals of this species may often be observed in the water from the train as it passes over the railway bridge at Allahabad, a short distance below the junction of the Jumna and the Ganges.

³ Chaudhuri, *loc. cit.*

gong, has a tank close by which is full of turtles locally known as *Mádáris* and fishes called *Gajáris* [large *Ophiocephali*—N. A.]. I have not yet found out what these words mean, but Shah Madár is the name of another Muhammadan saint and, perhaps, Bayazid Bistami named the tortoises after his rival in derision. It is locally believed that these tortoises were once sinful men whom the saint metamorphosed into turtles as a punishment for their wickedness. I have, however, recently got hold of a Persian History of Chittagong which, I hope, will give further information on the subject. The saint, I believe, did not die in Chittagong, but is buried somewhere up-country. Probably, the shrine was formerly a Hindu or aboriginal one which was taken over by the Muhammadans.

[H. E. S. 1-7-1914.]
